

THE PRISONER;

OR,

THE RESEMBLANCE.

(From the French.)

A COMIC OPERA,

IN ONE ACT.

First Edition.

ADAPTED TO THE ENGLISH STAGE

BY

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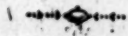
1799.

*Collated
&
Perfect.
J. F. K. 1814.*

*See Castle of Braccato
vol. 357.*



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.



Men.

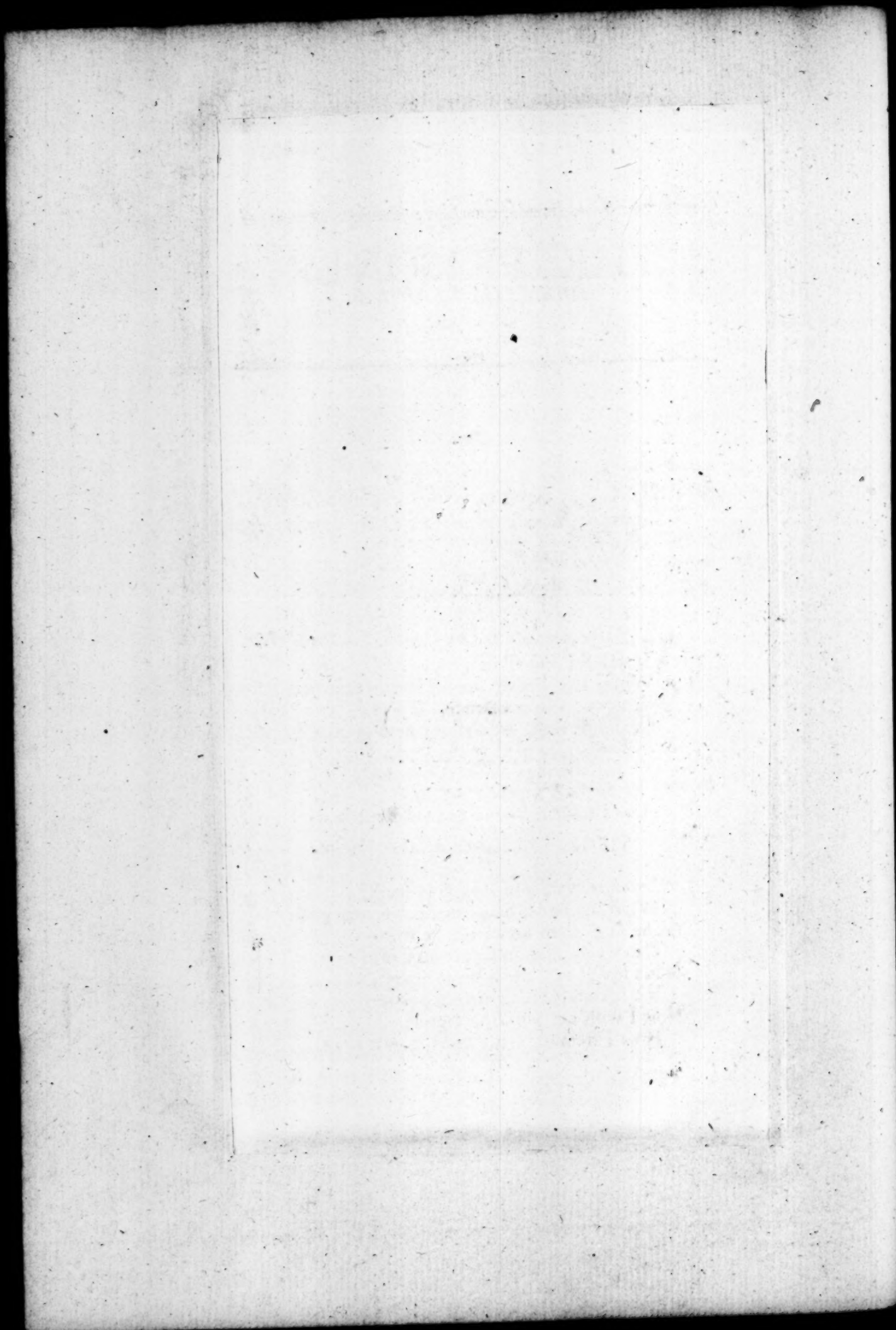
Blinval, the Prisoner, Lieut. of Hussars
Governor of Sorrento.....
Captain Murville.....
Germain, his Servant.....
A Corporal.....

Orderly Serjeant, Soldiers on Guard, Footmen, &c.

Women,

The Widow Belmont.....
Rosina, her Daughter.....

SCENE. At Sorrento, near Naples.



THE PRISONER,

&c. &c.

SCENE I. *A Drawing Room elegantly furnished;
on the right Hand a Bed-room Door, opening upon
the Stage.*

SONG. ROSINA.

I.

WHERE the woodbine rejoices to creep,
Where sweet roses and jessamines entwine;
Once again from my lattice I'll peep,
Should he sing, what enjoyment is mine!
So melodious, so pensive his tone;
As his sufferings he sweetly repeats,
All his sorrows appear as my own,
How I tremble!—my heart, how it beats!

II.

Wherefore warble so loudly, so shrill?
Whistling birds, how unwelcome your glee!
As he sings from his turret, be still—
Can't you listen in silence like me?
Not a leaf should the breezes molest,
If a breath babbling echo repeats,
How I wish her intrusion repress;
How I tremble!—my heart, how it beats!

B

(*Looking out at the sides*). Heigho!--Well, while mama is at the Governor's, I'll steal to my balcony; I may perhaps hear once again the plaintive song of the poor prisoner of the castle.--It's very wicked of the Governor to keep so sweet a man coop'd up in that huge ugly tower. (*going*)

Ger. (*behind the scenes*) Holoe, hoe, hoe!--within there, hoe!

Ros. Who can that be!

Ger. Bring in my cloak bag; rub down my hack; and get supper for two. (*enters*)

Ros. Pray where do you suppose yourself, that you're so much at home?

Ger. At the rich widow Belmont's, who has a daughter, young, beautiful, and charming.--*The pearl of the state!* whose most obsequious, most profound, devoted slave I am proud to announce myself. (*bowing affectedly.*)

Ros. And who are you?

Ger. Of Cupid's *corps diplomatique*, ambassador of Love, courier of Hymen, the faithful follower--though I sometimes precede my master, of Captain Murville--Germain at your service. (*bowing.*)

Ros. Ah, from our cousin Murville;--wait here, and I'll inform mama! (*aside*) Now for one sweet, last, momentary peep, from my balcony. [*Exit.*]

Ger. (*alone*) What can detain my master at Naples! O!--I have it--the imprisonment of his young friend Blinval, that hair-brain'd mad-cap who has drawn on his colonel. The affair is tremendously serious; but, as he signalized himself in action, and as he saved my master's life, he'll leave no steps untried to obtain his release. Eh!--now I recollect he's in this district--close prisoner

soner in the old castle of Sorrento. O, if I could but speak to him!---no no, the orders are too strict:---poor devil, he is trapp'd like a rat, and can be only peep'd at through his gratings.

Enter BLINVAL through the Bed-chamber Door, in a yellow Hussar Jacket, his Hair dischevell'd, and his Neckcloth loose.

Blin. (looking about) This apartment excels the last.---Am I awake, or is it all a dream?

Ger. (not seeing him) He is as wild as a young Tartar, as obstinate as a young devil,---but as found-hearted as a young *Englishman*!---I am delighted with that Blinval; nobody's enemy except his own.

Blin. (turning quick round) Blinval!---Who calls?---

Ger. (startling and drawing back) Eh!---what---no sure!---yes, but it is,---it is our mad Lieutenant. (*runs, and leaps on his neck.*)

Blin. Germain, not hang'd yet! But don't strangle me; I'm here you see, in spite of our old fusty Colonel, safe, sound, and hearty, boy;---so here's my hand. (*shaking hands with GERMAIN.*)

Ger. But by what miracle?---I thought you snug in one of the four towers of that damn'd castle.

Blin. So thinks the Governor, God help him! at this hour. You shall hear all; but tell me first whose is this house?

Ger. The widow Belmont's.

Blin. Has she a daughter?

Ger. Rosina, a great beauty, fresh, blooming, and sixteen.

Blin. Huzza! then I shall bless the day I heard the rusty hinges of Sorrento creak.

Ger.

Ger. Indeed! But now you're satisfied, relieve my curiosity.

Blin. Shut up in the south tower, I one day saw the daughter of this house at a lattic'd balcony. Woodbine and jessamines had cloath'd the wall, but were less fresh, less fragrant, than the fair stranger who eclips'd them.

Ger. O Lord, O Lord, if we're to creep thro' the woodbines, and prick our fingers with the rose-buds——

Blin. To the point then—She kept her eyes long fixed on me; I sought to touch her sensibility, by some plaintive couplets. Every day, fresh attentions—fresh songs. Her appearance render'd my prison insupportable, and, in a moment of ennui and desperation, I dashed a miserable wardrobe, in a dark corner of my room to atoms; a folded paper caught my eyes, I seiz'd it eagerly, it was directed——

Ger. How!

Blin. "*To the unfortunate, who succeeds me.*"

Ger. And the contents——

Blin. A legacy from the poor devil who preceded me. He had inhabited the same part of the Tower ten years; but love had soften'd the hardships of his captivity. Briefly, the paper marked a secret avenue leading to the adjoining house. I descended, traversed a subterraneous passage, climbed a cork-screw stair case, reached a small door, and, upon pressing back a spring, leaped into that bed-room.

Ger. (*opening the door, and looking in*) And the entrance!

Blin. Is concealed by that looking glass.

Ger. I can expound this mystery. The widow Belmont purchased this house from a young dame of
of

of quality: the door, the secret spring, the subterraneous avenue, all explain it. But now, what means our mad Lieutenant? Is it his object to escape?

Blin. Honour forbid!—But Love shall be as complaisant to me, as to my predecessor.

Ger. And do you think the widow Belmont will consent?

Blin. We must advance by stratagem; but what brought your rogue's face to Sorrento?

Ger. Marriage. Your friend Murville is Cousin German to the widow. They have been long involved in a law-suit, and were compell'd to correspond. The first letters were cold, the second more civil, the third touched on arrangements, and in the last they settled it to wind all up in the old-fashion'd way, by a marriage.

Blin. Excellent!—When will they solemnize?

Ger. The day's not fixed, for the parties have never met.

Blin. Not seen each other!—A reprieve!—Then I'm established in the house.

Ger. Eh!—How d'ye make that out?

Blin. Dolt! Dunderhead!—I shall pass for Murville!—She will receive, caress, feed, lodge,—

Ger. And marry you!—

Blin. No, no— but I'll obtain an interview with my Rosina; speak to her frequently, and breathe my vows of love and constancy *in a pure air*.

Ger. In the mean time, they'll visit the south tower, find the bird flown, and send him back to whistle his soft notes *in a foul air, and a closed cage*.

Blin. They visit me but once a day, and till to-morrow's noon I'm safe.

Ger.

Ger. Allowing this, how will that *negligée* suit the *Lover*!

Blin. My history is composed; I have been stopp'd by a banditti.

Ger. Ha, ha, ha, ha! (*laughing*) You're never at a loss; always a tale at your tongue's end!—but *my scruples*!

Blin. Have, like all other things, their price, and must be satisfied. Fifty Louis for *their repose*. (*shaking a purse*).

Ger. And you take all upon yourself; then, Sir, they're hush'd. Here comes the widow too most opportune.

Blin. Attention then, and to our posts.

Enter Mrs. BELMONT, preceded by a footman with lighted candles, he places them on a table, and then retires.

Mrs. Bel. Is it you, gentlemen, who wish to speak with me?

Ger. Yes, Madam, it was I gallop'd on joyfully to announce Captain Murville,—but, O Heav'ns!

Mrs. Bel. You alarm me; what has befall'n him?

Ger. O, bitter news! Speak, Sir, yourself, for I want words (*aside*) and impudence.

Mrs. Bel. What is it *you*, Cousin?

Blin. As you perceive—and in no better state! (*looking at his own dress*.)

Mrs. Bel. What has happen'd?

Blin. Friendship, love, and anxiety, all urg'd me to haste here; unfortunately, a banditti—

Mrs. Bel. Robbers!

Blin. Stopp'd me some leagues from this.

Ger. Five minutes later, and I had shar'd his fate. O, terrible!

Mrs. Bel. Robbers!

TRIO.

TRIO. BLINVAL—*Mrs.* BELMONT—GERMAIN.

Blin. Affection induc'd me all dangers to brave;
I mounted my horse in the dead of the night.

Ger. *This Love* had near shewn him the way to his
grave,

When you hear his escape, you'll be seiz'd
with affright!

Mrs. Bel. Such a hazard was wrong,

Ger. But his reasons were strong;

Blin. From the forest they rush'd, full a score at
the least;

Ger. (aside) How he brags, how he lies!

Blin. Taken thus by surprise:

Mrs. Bel. Alas, all my fears, my alarms, are increas'd!

Blin. With my back to a tree,
At one thrust dispatch'd three.

Ger. and { Seventeen with drawn swords remain'd
Mrs. Bel. { circling him round;

Mrs. Bel. Alas! could no aid, could no succour be
found!

Such a risk, such a state!

Ger. Faith his dangers were great:

Blin. The blood of six others soon reddens my
sword—

Ger. (aside) What a bounce! what a lie!

Blin. Not a creature came by;—

Mrs. Bel. Alas! sure such numbers at last over-
power'd!—

Blin. With ten wounds gaping wide,
And six thrusts in the side,
I fought till my blood in a torrent was
pour'd.

Ger. { He fought till his blood in a torrent was
pour'd;

Blin. { Then fainting I sunk—by such odds over-
power'd;

Mrs. Bel. { Alas! what a state! by such odds over-
power'd!

C

Mrs.

Mrs. Bel. What a calamity! But how came you so soon cured of your wounds?

Blin. Stretched on the ground for dead, the cowards rifled me, but fled on the approach of travellers, who coming up found me still breathing, and gave me every assistance in their power. I was some time confined, but excepting a weakness, a few qualms and meagrimms, no inconvenience follows.

Mrs. Bel. (aside) He is younger than I conceived; well made and elegant. *(To him)* My last letter must have convinced you I was desirous to have all points explained.

Blin. O, very true, and we'll explain ourselves off hand. Germain, get me some decent clothes, for I'm ashamed to see myself. I've the appearance—

Ger. (apart to him) Of a jail-bird,—precisely.

[Exit.]

Mrs. Bel. Now we're alone, we can discourse on business—

Blin. Certainly; but at this moment I'm so confused. The blows those robbers dealt have made me so light-headed—so absent—that for some time to come we shall be at cross purposes.

Mrs. Bel. But don't you think it will be right to send a deed of settlement to an attorney?

Blin. Why, yes—I think so; it will be certainly quite right and necessary.

Mrs. Bel. You consent then to keep the farm?

Blin. The farm!—O, true—yes, yes—I'm decided, we'll keep the farm.

Mrs. Bel. But we must recollect my daughter; she has just claims—

Blin. (quickly) The greatest possible. She is so good, so beautiful, such a soft tender air, so interesting, so charming—

Mrs.

Mrs. Bel. (surprised) And so flatter'd! How can you tell all this? You've never met!—

Blin. (aside) Madman! *(to her)* O! I speak from report. But oblige me; drop the law-suit.

Mrs. Bel. Why, you forget; you drop the suit?

Blin. Do I?—O, true—but I told you my head was so confused. *(tenderly)* Let's talk of our approaching happiness.

Mrs. Bel. Willingly; your letters, penn'd with such sensibility, warrant all frankness on my side. Without having ever seen each other, we have been long acquainted. But I expected, I confess, a man of my own age, and you appear quite young.

Blin. True, I have ever been thought young; and surely, coz, that's no misfortune.

Mrs. Bel. (smiling) No; but as reason and friendship form the basis of our union, I am tempted to regard it as a defect.

Blin. As a defect! Few of your sex are of that mind.

DUETTO.

Mrs. BELMONT—BLINVAL.

Mrs. Bel. O, marriage requires an agreement in age,
Young men and old women should never
engage;
The bloom quickly flies from the full op'n-
ing rose.
And the youth, for the bud pining, loses re-
pose.
If disparity may be endur'd, 'tis the bride
Should be young, and the man have *the wane*
on his side;
Near Aurora we all know that Titon ap-
pears,
To revive and grow young, in despite of
his years.

C 2

Blin.

Blin. Where affection unites, all dull rules are de-
spis'd,
And Time with his wrinkles and frost
held in scorn ;
The secret *to please* at all ages is priz'd,
And the rose of the evening as sweet as
the morn.
Away then with dull, hackney'd, common-
place reason,
Love laughs at all maxims, Love's always in
season.

Mrs. Bel.

Once united,

Blin.

Then, I fear,

Mrs. Bel.

Don't be frighted,

Blin.

Not so clear ;

Mrs. Bel.

Constant ever,

Blin.

Faithless, gay ;

Mrs. Bel.

Fickle never,

Clear as day.

Blin.

Come, come, let's strike hands then, in
spight of my youth ;

Mrs. Bel.

Well, well, I'll strike hands then, in
spight of your youth ;

Blin.

I'll promise you'll find me *a model of truth !*

Mrs. Bel.

You promise I'll find you *a model of truth !*

Blin.

Oddzooks, Ma'am, when married, my life
to a pea ;

Mrs. Bel.

When married and settled, my life to a
pea,

Blin.

Of all gay dashing widows the envy you'll
be ;

Mrs. Bel.

Of all gay dashing widows the envy I'll
be.

Enter GERMAIN, bringing a brown Surtout.

Ger. I have searched all the town, and can find
nothing that will do ; but I have brought you
your surtout.

Blin. O, I dare not presume—

Mrs.

Mrs. Bel. Why not? Think of your comfort, and a truce to forms. Germain, that room will be your master's.

Blin. (*aside*) By all that's fortunate, the secret door!

Mrs. Bel. I must prepare my daughter to receive you; but recollect, a father-in-law should be grave and sedate. Adieu. [*Exit.*

(*BLINVAL, before the Glass, ties his Neckcloth—GERMAIN attends with the Surtout.*)

Blin. Allons, Germain; the day's our own. Victory, my boy! And with Murville's surtout, I have acquired his grave steady deportment—Don't you find it?

Ger. Steady!—with a vengeance; this trick's a proof on't. There, rake his coat, but if you're other than Blinval, I shall look out for the world's end.

Blin. But I'm determin'd to reform.

Ger. Which way?

Blin. By marrying.

Ger. Why, faith, if any thing can tame you, I believe that may.

Blin. Six month's seclusion from the world brings on reflection, and I'm determined to reform.

ROUNDEAU.

BLINVAL.

'Tis fix'd as fate; yes, yes. I'll marry,
Live a philosopher, steadily and wise;
A sober grave deportment carry,
Tho' rakes should jeer me—brother bloods despise.
A wife discreet
Makes Hymen sweet;

My

My house so neat, so nice arrang'd !
 With ease content
 Each moment spent,
 Guests once secur'd they're ne'er estrang'd.

'Tis fix'd as fate ; yes, yes, I'll marry,
 Live a philosopher, steadily and wise ;
 A sober grave deportment carry,
 Tho' rakes should jeer me—brother bloods despise,
 All prospers round,
 A partner found,
 Good humour'd, smiling, ever dear ;
 A son and heir,
 A daughter fair !

The more the merrier, our hearts to cheer.

'Tis fix'd as fate ; yes, yes, I'll marry,
 Live a philosopher, steadily and wise ;
 A sober, grave deportment carry,
 Tho' rakes should jeer me—brother bloods despise,

Blin. My stars all shine propitious ; they have allotted me the room leading to the south tower ; every time my presence is necessary, I'll lock my door, glide to my prison, and whip back—no one the wiser.

Ger. But my master in the mean time appears, off goes my livery, and I'm cooped up in your agreeable south tower !

Blin. I shall rejoice in such good company ; but see, the sun peeps forth, mists, fogs, and vapours fly ! Here comes Rosina.

Gen. Then you'll dispense with me ; so, if you please, I'll veil myself amidst the fogs and vapours, and fly too. [Exit.]

Enter ROSINA.

Ros. (aside) This then is my step-father, and I must be respectful, and so forth ; so says mama—Heigho !

Blin.

Blin. (aside) She'll be astonished when she perceives the prisoner, whose misfortunes she bewailed. *(going towards her)*

Ros. (starting back) O Heavens!—Can I believe my eyes!—His very features!

Blin. What startles you, sweet cousin? Have I already the misfortune to displease?

Ros. No, Sir;—no—certainly not that; but I was struck with the resemblance to a friend; yes, Sir, an absent friend, too little known, and, alas! too unfortunate. Pardon me, Sir, but my tongue falters—my heart throbs, and my face burns. I must beg to retire.

Blin. (aside) Sweet proofs of artless love!—don't leave me, coz *(taking her hand)*. *(Aside)* I'll seize on this propitious moment, throw myself at her feet, and avow my deceit. Dearest Rosina!—O, here's this teizing amorous widow, she haunts me. *(walking up and down)*

Enter Mrs. BELMONT.

Mrs. Bel. I interrupt you, to announce a guest. An old friend of the family's—the Governor of the Castle.

Blin. (starting) Eh!—who?—the Governor!

Mrs. Bel. Yes, he has desired to sup with us, that he may cultivate your acquaintance.

Blin. (muttering) O, he's had opportunities enough—here's a cursed scrape!—The Governor! all my unlucky planets must have join'd! *(walking about)*

Mrs. Bel. Run—haste, Rosina; give directions that the supper may suit our guests.

ROSINA, with her eyes fixed on BLINVAL, does not attend)

Mrs.

Mrs. Bel. Why, ayn't you gone?

Ros. (aside, as she retires) Oh! the resemblance is astonishing! [Exit.]

Mrs. Bel. How kind of our good friend!—the very first day you arrive!—

Blin. (walking about) O, kind—yes, yes—very kind—to a degree; but I'm so terribly fatigued. After fighting with twenty footpads, I feel oppressed with sleep.

Mrs. Bel. Well, we'll sup early then; such exertions must have given you an appetite.

Blin. But can't we sup alone? On the footing we stand a third is insupportable.

Mrs. Bel. (smiling) We shall have opportunities enough for *tetes à tete*.

Blin. We have so much to say—the farm—the settlements—the attorney—the suit—

Mrs. Bel. O, your head is so confused! But there's no sending an excuse, for he's already on the stairs; I hear his voice

Gov. (behind) Hang up my Roquelaure; and let the Serjeant wait.

Blin. (aside) Now, impudence, stand my ally; there's no alternative.

(Turns on one Side, wraps his Coat round him, and looks over some Papers he takes from his Pocket.)

Enter the GOVERNOR.

Gov. Ha! here you are; well, I'm not tardy, you perceive—close at the heels of my billet. Oh! there's the Captain; he'll not be sorry to join hands with an old veteran, who has deserved well of his country, and who enjoys a snug retreat, a chearful health and a good flask of Lachrimachristi, to fight past battles over. Introduce us

us, widow; I want to talk about my last campaigns.

Mrs. Bel. Cousin, our friend the Governor—
Captain Murville.

Blin. (*putting up his papers*) Eh! who! O, I beg pardon, I was absorbed in a dull calculation.

Gov. (*advancing to him*) I interrupt you, Sir; but—(*starts back and stares*) eh—how—this is confounded strange (*rubbing his eyes*) is that Captain Murville!

Mrs. Bel. Certainly, Governor, my cousin Murville.

Gov. Well, its astonishing! I could have sworn—(*aside*) if I'd not seen him in the south tower, and inspected the walls; if I had not the keys—(*jingling them in his coat-pocket*)

(*BLINVAL all this time looks the GOVERNOR full in the face, and turns occasionally, with affected surprise, to Mrs. BELMONT.*)

Blin. I'm fortunate in attracting your notice—
(*laughing*) Prithee, widow, what can this mean?

Gov. (*to Mrs. BEL.*) Pardon, fair neighbour, but your cousin calls to my mind so forcibly the features of a young officer, I have but seldom seen 'tis true; but—(*laughing*) ha, ha, ha, ha! it only proves how one may be deceived.

Blin. And this young officer—

Gov. (*laughing*) Ha, ha, ha, ha! is at this moment between four high walls—there—not ten yards from us, in the south tower.

Blin. Ha, ha, ha, ha! and you supposed he'd leaped your barrier, swam the wet ditch, and giv'n your whisker'd sentries sleeping draughts. Faith, if you've got him once in the south tower—

Gov. Ha, ha, ha, ha! I'll forgive him if he escapes.

D

Blin.

Blin. You may venture---I have inspected its security---

Gov. Then you must know he is as snug as bolts, walls, chains, and centinals, can keep him.

Mrs. Bel. Poor wretch! You treat him too severely.

Gov. Faith my orders are strict, but I soften as much as possible the rigours of his captivity: Humanity has a command over me strict as the King's, and I am equally subservient to her mandates.

Mrs. Bel. Who is your prisoner?

Gov. Blinval, Lieutenant of Hussars; about your cousin's age.

Blin. Blinval! I know him well; we served in the same corps, used the same tent, and were never asunder.

Gov. Well, isn't there some likeness?

Blin. Astonishing---we were supposed of the same birth; I was always taken for him.

Gov. I believe it; but there's a difference; you have more gravity, more sense; he has the look of a wild rattling rake---a silly coxcomb---a young fop.

Mrs. Bel. You find him so.

Gov. No, no, I judge from physiognomy; but he's unfortunate, and I'm to blame; all the charges are serious, and I'm afraid it must go hard.

Mrs. Bel. What a pity!

Blin. I'm as much griev'd as if it were myself---we were such friends.

Gov. Were you so? Then I've a mind---there can be no great risque---but you must promise to be secret.

Blin. What do you mean?

Gov.

Gov. (*to Mrs. BEL.*) I should like much to see them both together; he shall sup here.

Blin. Sup here!---Blinval!---

Mrs. Bel. It will be very kind, and I thank your attention to my cousin.

Blin. O don't mind me; but you're joking; his confinement's too close.

Gov. I wish to give you this first proof of my consideration and esteem.

Blin. (*embarrassed*) O, you're too good; but you must not think of it: we have quarrelled most furiously.

Gov. Quarrell'd! a-ha! there is my fort; I'm the best hand in Naples at an accommodation.—
You shall be friends.

Blin. I can never see him.

Gov. *You shall be friends.*

Blin. We two can't meet.

SONG.

GOVERNOR.

I.

You shall be friends, leave the settlement to me,

Zounds! don't I tell you man, my fort was always there?

Once *all our regiment* resolv'd to disagree,

But I soon made them pop all their pistols in the air,

The Colonel call'd the Major out,

For nothing just at all;

I put an end to all the rout—

They fir'd—but *not a ball*.

Thus I settled the dispute just according to the rules;

Who blow each other's brains out—what are they?—why they're fools.

Da

You

II.

*You shall be friends ; tho' you quarrell'd for a blow ;
 Zounds ! the more difficult, the better I adjust ;
 If he gave you a slap, you shall tread upon his toe ;
 The Lex talionis—and law-givers were just.
 The Major call'd the Captains out,
 They shav'd his horse's tail !
 The Subalterns set up a shout,
 And nothing would avail.
 But I settled the dispute just according to the rules,
 Who blow each other's brains out—what are they ?—why
 they're fools.*

III.

*You shall be friends ; though you quarrell'd on the lie ;
 Never start, the more difficult the better you'll agree :
 Thro' the blackest affront I can harmony descry,
 All the same, give me credit, as you quarrell'd for a flea.
 The Captains knock'd the Subs about,
 Because they chose to grin ;
 The Subs kick'd up a plaguy rout,
 And all was noise and din.
 Put I settled the dispute just according to the rules,
 Who blow each other's brains out—what are they ?—why
 they're fools. [Exit the Governor.*

Blin. (aside) I have but one alternative—back to my prison.

Mrs. Bel. How happy this will make poor Blinval. Come, come, you must oblige me, and be reconcil'd ; it is my first request, I must insist on your compliance.

Blin. Insist Ma'am ! My injured honour brooks no interference. Seek not to thwart me—some dreadful consequences must ensue—some consequences you cannot foresee. Insist, Ma'am ! (snatches up a candle) I wish you good night (rushes into the bed-chamber, and locks his door).

Mrs.

Mrs. Bel. (alone) What madness; what indecency! I thought in Murville to have found mildness and sensibility:—but I'm not married to him yet; and as you've given this sample of your temper before hand—we'll be still Cousins if you please.

SONG. *Mrs. BELMONT.*

I.

Before marriage what proofs of deception we find;
Tho' they rail at *our sex*, in the bulk of mankind;
No sooner pronounce we the dreadful *obey*,
All occasions they seize to establish their sway.
But my danger is plain, and I'll never afford,
A triumph to such a dread master and lord.

II.

For ages has woman establish'd her reign
Despotic, till fetter'd by Hymen's rude chain;
Unbounded her pow'r stands, enthron'd on the heart;
And shall I from a charter so pleasing depart?
No—my danger is plain, and I'll never afford,
A triumph to such a dread master and lord.

Enter ROSINA.

Ros. Alone, Mama! where is your company?

Mrs. Bel. O, Mr. Murville has retired to his apartment for the night.

Ros. Is he unwell then?—poor young man!

Mrs. Bel. No, no—he is quite well, but he chose to retire.

Ros. Sure that appears a little ungallant; then, our nice supper's of no use.

Mrs. Bel. His place will be supplied. The Governor conceives there's a resemblance between
Murville

Murville and one of his prisoners ; and he's gone for the captive.

Ros. (quick) What the young prisoner in the tower!---O, there's a great resemblance, so strong there's no mistaking it.

Mrs. Bel. Indeed!---pray, Rosina, how came you to remark it?

Ros. (embarrassed) O,---I've heard it. Ah! dear Mama, I'll tell you all, for I can't act the hypocrite. Every morning I've seen the poor prisoner from the stair-case balcony. I have sat there whole hours to hear him sing. He bewails his captivity; complains that all the world forsake him, *except me*. Could I hear this and not compassionate his fate?

Mrs. Bel. Rosina, your simplicity affects me. Pity for the unfortunate is a virtue, and I commend it; but it must have its limits. To pity him is your duty---but *to love* him would be imprudent.

Ros. (quick) O, I don't love Blinval, Mama, but I pity him---Ah! how sincerely!

ROMANCE. ROSINA.

I.

When from the hated lonely tower
His plaintive griefs he pour'd;
Tho' Reason sternly urg'd her power,
His mis'ries I deplor'd.
Whene'er I heard his woe-fraught tale,
Soft grief my heart would prove;
(*Mrs. BELMONT draws back.*)
Why start, Mama?---It can't avail;
For *Pity is not Love.*

II.

II.

Still pensive, live-long days I mourn'd,
And when his wailings ceas'd;
His dulcet sweet-ton'd voice return'd,
In fancy came at least.

My tongue retrac'd his woe-fraught tale,
Each word would faithful prove;

(*Mrs. BELMONT draws back and shakes her head.*)

Why start, Mama?—It can't avail,
For Pity is not Love.

Enter BLINVAL and the GOVERNOR. BLINVAL in his Hussar uniform, and his hair-dress, without a sword.

Blin. (as he enters) Ah! my head's giddy with confinement. I feel oppress'd with the pure air (*enters*).

Ros. It is Blinval.

Mrs. Bel. The resemblance is striking.

Gov. Ladies, I bring you a recluse, who, for some time, has virtuously renounced the fickle vanities and false allurements of the world, and like most penitents---*perforce*.

Blin. (with a mild accent) Past troubles are but as dreams, and this blest moment (*looking at Ros.*) cheaply purchas'd by ages of captivity.

Gov. But I don't see Murville!—is he still obstinate?

Blin. I was in hopes a difference in our youth would not have lost me his esteem.

Gov. Oddslife! scarce an hour passes without such disputes. At a mess dinner, they're as common as *toasts*, aye, and they pass as quick, always arranged over a bumper, glass in hand.---He'll expect an apology, we'll declare it sufficient, and you'll immediately shake hands.

Mrs.

Mrs. Bel. He refuses all overtures.

Blin. How you afflict me.--- But he'll relent.--- My misfortunes, the respect due to such kind mediators, and my acknowledgments, must in the end prevail.---

Ros. (*aside*) Charming young man! what a good heart! (*to him, first with a faltering voice, and then more firm*) I really tremble when I think, Sir, how you have suffered in that ugly tower.

Blin. My captivity would have been insupportable; but there were times, when I was soothed by such an agreeable object.

Ros. Heigho! (*aside*) I hope that agreeable object presented itself from the balcony. (*The Governor and Mrs. BELMONT advance, having before been conversing apart.*)

Ger. Shut up in his apartment! I'm disappointed I confess; I wished to judge of the resemblance as they stood face to face.

Mrs. Bel. (*smiling*) Your prisoner appears younger.

Ros. He has a softer voice.

Gov. And he is taller by---an inch. But it's so easy to decide. Shew me his room:---he shall capitulate, or we'll reduce him by a storm.

Mrs. Bel. (*pointing*) That is his door.

Gov. Blinval, assist me, boy;---we'll batter it in breach.

QUARTETTO.

The GOVERNOR, Mrs. BELMONT, BLINVAL, and ROSINA.

Gov. Knock, knock, knock;—
Knock at his door, knock; thunder away.
(*They knock loud at the door*)

Blin. The Governor commands, his voice obey.
I doubt him much, but soon you'll see
He'll ne'er come face to face with me.

Yet

Yet on the watch he's forc'd to keep;
While Blinval wakes he'll never sleep.

Gov. (knocking) A headstrong devil, won't he stir?
High time I swear this strife to close;
Peep from your covert, surly Sir;
The Governor must interpose.

(knocking again.)

Ros. and } Our joint endeavours must prevail;
Mrs. Bel. } When *we* request he can't refuse;
 } Their enmity's of no avail;
 } They must be friends, they can't but chuse,
Blin. } Be silent friends—his voice I hear—
All Four. } He answers—listen, listen—so—
 } Be silent;—draw with caution near;—
 } Be silent.——

Blin. Hark!—he answers *No.*

Ros. He doesn't stir; I'm sure 'tis so;—

Blin. Be satisfied, he answers *No.*

Ros. to } Did you hear him?

Mrs. Bel. } *No.*

Mrs. Bel. } Did you hear him?

to the Gov. } *No.*

Ros. He didn't stir; I'm sure 'tis so;—

Blin. Be satisfied, he answers *No.*

Enter a CORPORAL of the Guard.

Corp. Governor! a stranger's arrived, and brings orders about the prisoner Blinval.

Gov. Ah! this looks serious. *(to Blin.)* You must return to the south tower.

Blin. So soon deprived of the enjoyment I have so short a time possess'd, so hardly earn'd!

Ros. I am distress'd at this cross accident.

Blin. Indeed! *(pleased)* then I'm happy; Blinval is not indifferent—

Gov. Come, there's no time to lose, you must give up the ladies for the corporal.

Mrs. Bel. Through the indulgence of the Governor we shall soon meet.—Adieu.

E

Gov.

Gov. Conduct the prisoner to the south tower: I'll follow presently.

Ros. Adieu!—Adieu, Blinval!

[*Exeunt BLINVAL and CORP.*]

Gov. It's a bad business I'm afraid. These dispatches augur no good.

Ros. If they condemn him it will break my heart.

Gov. Drawn on his colonel; breach of subordination.—Charge upon charge, he stands no chance. These youngsters are so wild, they think a dash of bravery comprises all military duties:—it's the least part.—He who obeys best, best commands.—If you want proofs, see what strict discipline's kept up in the castle.

Ros. Blinval! you have my prayers, may they be heard! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE changes to the Outside of the Castle. An antique Building with four Towers, enclosed by a high Wall, and surrounded by a wet Ditch. A Draw-bridge up. Sentries posted, Cannons mounted, &c. A View (across the Bay of Naples) of Vesuvius in the Distance. The Scene is by Moonlight; and the Reflection thrown on the Water. BLINVAL passes silently over the Stage, followed by the CORPORAL. The Draw-bridge is let down. The Guard turns out and receives him. The Bridge is drawn up; and all remains still for a few Moments. The Sentries then cry "All's well" from within. MURVILLE enters, in the same Uniform as BLINVAL, with his Cloak on, his Hussar Cap, and Sword. He views the Castle with Attention, and advances.

SONG. MURVILLE.

Can I ever forget, while the foe we engaged,
While with thunder and fire the artillery raged;

Amoy'd

Annoy'd by a batt'ry they'd mask'd on a height,
 Our squadrons were thinn'd ere they mix'd in the fight.
 Our hussars dash'd in front, its rude clamours to still;
 And the skirmish was sharp on the brow of the hill;
 A sabre was aim'd at my head in the strife,
 BLINVAL parried the blow, and I owe him my life.

Then gratitude still shall with fervency glow;
 Each moment I breathe feels its ardour increas'd;
 For the life he has sav'd I shall freedom bestow!
 What raptures are mine! since my friend is releas'd.

Can I ever forget, while the foe we engaged,
 While with thunder and fire the artillery raged;
 Annoy'd by a batt'ry they'd mask'd on a height,
 Our squadrons were thinn'd ere they mix'd in the fight.
 Our hussars dash'd in front, its rude clamours to still,
 And the skirmish was sharp on the brow of the hill,
 A sabre was aim'd at my head in the strife,
 BLINVAL parried the blow, and I owe him my life.

(*Pulling out his watch*) What can detain this
 loitering Governor! Could I impart to him my
 feelings and anxiety, he would be swift indeed;
 but the scenes he's accustomed to, deaden his
 sensibility,---Oh!---here he comes.

*Enter the GOVERNOR from the opposite side, in a
 blue Cloak, followed by a Serjeant, bearing the
 Keys. MURVILLE salutes and meets him.*

Mur. I presume, Sir,---the Governor.

Gov. At your service.---I understand you have
 dispatches from Naples.

Mur. For the release of one of your state pri-
 soners.---I have the packet in my hand.

Gov. Welcome, Sir, to Sorrento. I am seldom
 so pleas'd as when I bid my old acquaintances a

good journey, tho' they're never grateful enough to wish to pay me a second visit.

Mur. I am impatient to afford you that enjoyment. There are my orders,—inspect them; there's the king's seal—they are correct.

Gov. (reading) *Blinval!*—I am rejoiced.—Serjeant, the keys; (*whispers the Serjeant*) to the Widow's—(*the Serjeant goes off.*)

But we lose time.—Lower the bridge:—(*the bridge is lowered:—the Sentry challenges them;—the GOVERNOR gives him the counter-sign;—the Guard turns out.*) Come, Sir, man's liberty must not be trifled with.

[*The GOVERNOR and MURVILLE pass over the bridge, which is immediately drawn up, and the Scene changes to Mrs. BELMONT'S:—the same Apartment; a Table spread with Wines, Cold Meat, and a Desert.*

Enter Mrs. BELMONT and ROSINA.

Ros. O mama! I've such good news!

Mrs. Bel. Well, child, what is it?

Ros. There's a message from the Governor's—and the stranger who brought dispatches from Naples, is a sweet, charming, dear, delightful man!

Mrs. Bel. Indeed—was that the Governor's message?

Ros. No, no—but he brings orders about *Blinval*, we shall all be so happy! He is released!

Mrs. Bel. Released!—

Ros. The orders are signed by the King, and he'll be here to supper, a free man.

(*Blinval peeps from the bed-room, holding the door half-open'd, in the furtout, his hair again comb'd loose, personating Murville.*)

But

But here's our cross, ill-natur'd, *ugly* Cousin--- he's not like Blinval in the least.

Blin. Is then that favour'd Blinval gone--- If he's not Cousin, I must again retire--- (*advances*) Don't be displeas'd, I can't act otherwise.

Ros. Truly, an excellent reason.

Mrs. Bel. The Governor was piqued; he made himself hoarse at your door, and you would not answer.

Blin. I answer'd him repeatedly!

Ros. Yes, by a simple *no*; and 'poor Blinval, who condescended to call you his friend; O, there's no likeness in the least---it's enough to see you both for an instant to discover the difference.

Blin. (*smiling*) You find a difference then! Ah, little Cousin mine. Blinval has made a conquest; you esteem him I find.

Ros. (*warmly*) Yes, if you come to that, *great Cousin mine*, I do esteem him, Mama esteems him, the Governor esteems him, and we esteem him *all*; he is mild, sensible, pleasant, and, above all, he's not *inveterate* and sulky---he's not like you.

Mrs. Bel. Fye, Rosina, you carry things too far.

Blin. O, check her not---her warmth charms me---Blinval's praises are, as my own---but we can never meet, nay, if we did---if he once saw my face, I should not be surpris'd if he leap'd from the window in a fright.

Ros. He! O, it's fine talking---you say all this because you think he's a prisoner--when he comes here you'll change your tone.

Blin. Ah! but he'll not come here.

Ros. There's your mistake, for he'll sup here to-night; he is releas'd.

Blin. Releas'd! O, it's impossible!

Ros. Yes, to give you an opportunity of making him leap from the window; he is at liberty, and will come here.

Blin.

Blin. (*leaping about*) Tol de rol, de rol, lol, de rol, lol! I shall run mad! this unexpected fortune. O, Rosina, don't be angry—but, I adore you.

Ros. (*running to the window*) Poor man! he's mad!

Mrs. Bel. This adventure with the robbers has turn'd his head.

Blin. Pardon, Rosina, my presumption; but I adore, I idolize you.

Ros. Make him keep back, Mama, for he's quite mad—how his eyes roll!

Enter the GOVERNOR and MURVILLE from the bedroom; the Governor with a flambeau; Serjeant and Corporal with several Soldiers, follow.

Gov. How, Mr. Proteus! So you're trapp'd—what, then you put the Governor, and all his chains, bolts, bars, and sentries, at defiance, hey? Here you have thought this pickle, your Cousin—but, give me leave, I must make known the real Murville (*introduces him to Mrs. Bel.*) and that whipstart is my recluse of the south tower! Blinval in his sheep's cloaths;—pretty sweet innocent, see how demure he seems.

Mur. It is e'en so—Germain has told us all, Cousin, my friend Blinval has had the ingenuity to find a secret communication from his prison to that apartment, and I believe your fair daughter first set his wits at work. The State is benefited by the discovery; but he deserves to be made *Prisoner for Life*—will you consent? Rosina has forged them, and he's, I dare be sworn, ready to hug his chains.

Mrs. Bel. I have had proofs of my daughter's attachment, and if she'll venture on such a prison-

prison-breaker, she is her own mistress. Nay, child, if he consents, lock up his heart, and, like the Governor, temper your sway with gentleness.

Mur. And secure it by love. (*giving BLINVALE her hand.*)

Blin. Sweet pledge! And if I seek to break these bonds——

Ref. I'll have no vows. If the chain galls, 'twill be my fault; and, if you shake it off, I shall deservedly be punished.

FINALE.

Blin. Fears, dangers, and doubts, let them vanish in air;

With raptures I still shall remember the hour,

When forc'd the hard fate of a pris'nier to bear,
I heard the gates closing behind of my tow'r.

Tho' fetters and bolts we contrive to remove;

Tho' chains we unrivet, and manacles fall;

We'll hug to our bosoms the fetters of love;

Love laughs at rebellion, and subjugates all.

CHORUS.

Tho' fetters and bolts, &c.

Gov. Oddlife, this is right, and I'm tir'd of my sway,

I've a mind to be fighting; I'm never at rest.

Mrs. Bel. Let the government change, and a female obey.

No man till he gets him a wife can be blest.

CHORUS.

Tho' fetters and bolts, &c.

Ref. How happy they seem! will it ever be so?

Mrs. Bel. It depends on ourselves; if we study to please,

The

THE PRISONER.

Ref. The choice is our own of enjoyment or woe;
Mama, I was ever a lover of ease.

CHORUS.

Tho' fetters and bolts, &c.

Mur. Still pris'ners at large, while we wander
about,

Ref. If ever we're caught in a *family strife*.
Whoever determines to battle it out,
Shall march to *Sorrento*, a *Pris'ner for*
Life.

CHORUS.

Still Pris'ners at large, &c.

THE END.